Issue Paper

RAND Arroyo Center

Bettering the Balance

Large Wars and Small Contingencies

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The Army has been participating in smaller-scale contingencies, under such rubrics as disaster relief, peace operations, operations other than war, and so forth, for decades. What is new is the rate at which they have been occurring—more than a dozen since the end of the Cold War—and that the Army is now having to do its work with a much smaller force structure. This situation places the Army on the horns of a dilemma: How can it stay ready for its primary mission, fighting two major wars, while simultaneously preparing for and carrying out smaller-scale contingencies? The danger is that too great an involvement in these operations can undercut the Army's ability to do its primary job, particularly in light of force structure reductions that have left the Army thin in certain types of skills and units. That the readiness effects of small contingencies are neither widely nor well understood makes this even more likely. Furthermore, U.S. vital interests are typically not at stake in these types of operations, and the public is thus particularly intolerant of casualties that they might entail. This attitude causes the Army to place a high premium on force protection and overwhelming force to intimidate potential antagonists. Both steps drive up the personnel demands on a diminished force structure.

Three research projects in RAND's Arroyo Center are examining a wide range of smaller-scale contingencies from different perspectives.[1] Taken together, these studies argue that smaller-scale contingencies, particularly extended humanitarian and peace operations, can and do erode the capability to fight a major theater war far beyond what many realize. Fortunately, the Army has a number of options—some relatively simple—that it can pursue to enhance or expand on its capability for these operations. It can

- Use contractors;
- Rely on the reserves to restore warfighting capability;
- Redesign existing organizations to give them a wider range of capabilities;
- Improve routine training and provide additional focused training prior to deploying to a smaller-scale contingency;
- Reduce equipment problems by altering logistics processes and priorities; and
- Improve its effectiveness at information-related operations with an eye to shortening smaller-scale contingencies.

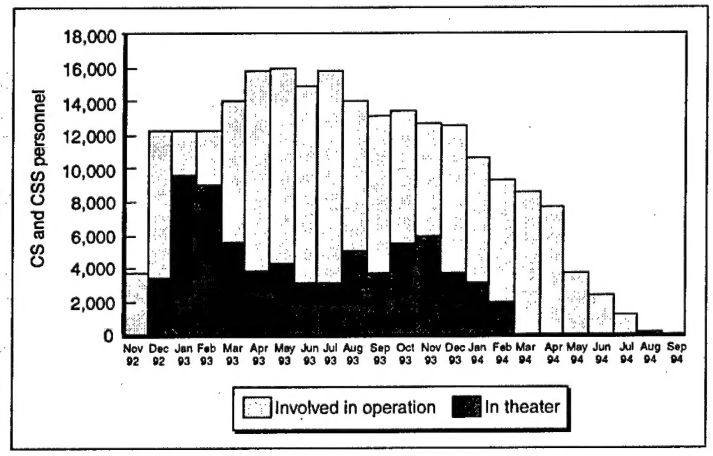
HOW SMALLER-SCALE CONTINGENCIES AFFECT ARMY CAPABILITIES

Smaller-scale contingencies affect Army warfighting capabilities primarily in two ways. They limit the availability of units for major conflicts, and they erode the capabilities and readiness of both deployed units and those that remain behind. Though all types of smaller-scale contingencies have these effects, they are particularly evident in extended peace operations.

[1]The projects are "Implications of Changing National Security Strategy for Army Active-Reserve Mix," "Limits of Peace Operations," and "Information Operations in Lesser Conflicts and Other Contingencies."

Availability of Units

The most obvious effect of smaller-scale contingencies is that Army units involved in them are neither preparing nor available for other operations, at least immediately. The full impact on availability may be masked because traditional unit counts understate the effect, which extends beyond the units in the theater. For example, the figure shows the number of soldiers affected by the Somalia operation. The darker portion of the bars reflects the number of soldiers (combat, combat support, and combat service support) actually in the theater. The lighter part of the bar shows the number of soldiers involved in the operation but not in the theater. These people are in units that are preparing to deploy to, in transit, or recovering from the operation. Calculating the total numbers in each category shows that the number of people involved in the operation but not in the theater can be as much as four times the number directly participating in the theater. During the Somalia operation, the total number involved peaked when the fewest were in theater.



Personnel Involved in Somalia Operation

The specifics of the rotation policy can increase the number of people affected. The shorter the rotations, the more units are involved. For example, Arroyo Center researchers calculate that in a theater employing 10 units, a rotation policy of 180 days will affect 15 additional units; one of 120 days will affect another 20 units (this assumes a commitment to restore units within 90 days).

Smaller-scale contingencies also affect units not involved in the operation. Cross-leveling of personnel often occurs because most units are not organized in peacetime with their full complement of wartime personnel. Therefore, when they deploy, they require augmentation to bring them up to full strength, and these augmentees are generally drawn from other active units. For example, analysis of the troop list of units that deployed to Somalia shows the presence of ten military police companies containing 1,193 soldiers. Examining the personnel data for the military police occupational specialty reveals that to fill the ten companies to their deployment strength, military police personnel deployed from 62 different units.

Moreover, drawdown and personnel policies exacerbate the effect on uninvolved units. Besides not being authorized their wartime complement of personnel, the type of units frequently demanded for smaller-scale contingencies (i.e., support units), are often undermanned relative to their peacetime authorizations. But deploying units typically are brought up to or near their full wartime authorization. Thus, the number of people drawn from units remaining behind is even greater than it would be if the deploying units were filled only to peacetime levels.

The effect also spreads because the Army tends to tailor units for many smaller-scale contingencies. This means drawing platoons or sections from other types of units to provide a capability needed for a given contingency. For instance, a divisional engineer unit, equipped to build defensive positions and breach obstacles, may need to be augmented with construction or road-building capability, which will be drawn from other types of engineer units. The effect of these partial deployments is not fully appreciated. It is not just the deployed forces that become unavailable; the part of the unit that stays behind may also be unavailable because it is missing a key element. It may not have the necessary equipment or personnel to train effectively or to deploy to a major conflict.

Capability of Units

The capability of units deploying to smaller-scale contingencies is affected as well as their availability. Although many tasks performed in these contingencies are similar to those done in major wars—e.g., occupying an observation post, countermine operations, and patrolling—the conditions and standards can differ markedly. For instance, in peace operations, patrolling tends to be overt rather than covert. It is important to demonstrate a presence, so patrols take steps to call attention to themselves. In combat, the reverse is true. When the unit returns from the contingency, it has to rebuild its essential wartime skills. Not only does combat require different tactics and techniques, it also requires a different mindset. This recovery period can last from a few weeks to several months depending on the type of unit, the nature and duration of the contingency, and the opportunity to train on warfighting skills while deployed.

These operations can also affect units because some tasks do differ. Soldiers have to train specifically on how to interact with populations. This training can range from

how to react at checkpoints, to how to handle defectors, to when to use lethal and nonlethal methods to respond to attacks. Such decisionmaking requires training both before and during operations to ensure that everyone knows how to react in a range of situations. Concerns about the local populace can also inhibit training. For example, it may not be possible to carry out chemical warfare training because of potential adverse publicity or misinformation generated by the sight of U.S. forces clad in chemical gear.

FORCE STRUCTURE APPROACHES TO OFFSET EFFECTS

For most types of units, the Army has sufficient force structure to deal with a limited number of smaller-scale contingencies and still respond to a theater conflict. However, a few specific types of units—e.g., quartermaster, transportation, civil affairs, and psychological operations units—are scarce in the active force, and they are typically the same types of units needed for smaller-scale contingencies.

While the Army has to address the issue of selected shortages, a force structure option it should not pursue is to create a unit specifically for peace operations. Even though such a unit could solve many problems and enable other units to concentrate on combat missions, several factors argue against it. First, it implies part-time training on combat skills. Units in smaller-scale contingencies must above all be effective combat forces, or else they will not be able to command the respect they need to carry out the mission. Combat effectiveness is a full-time job. Second, it would be difficult to create a unit with the breadth of skills needed. Expecting a single unit to have combat, civil affairs, engineer, medical, and the other skills needed for smaller-scale contingencies is unrealistic. Third, the unit would have to be relatively large to ensure that its members were not constantly deployed. Finally, even a large unit would not have been able to carry out the number of peace operations that the Army has faced recently. The Army needs to be able to draw on all its units to meet requirements for peace operations.

The Army has a number of better ways to address this shortfall. The number of units in short supply is sufficiently small that the Army could simply choose to add them to force structure. For example, in the case of Somalia, the entire combat service support shortage could have been eliminated by adding about seven thousand soldiers to the active structure. For most of the operation, the shortage was between four and five thousand. However, this would require the sacrifice of an equal number of combat spaces and, in a time of intense budget pressure and with force structure cuts looming, other alternatives must be considered.

Using Contractors

The Army could turn to other sources for needed capabilities. For some types of skills, contractors may offer a better solution than adding support structure. The types of skills needed—such as construction, transportation, and road building—are readily available in the private sector and frequently can be obtained locally. The Army has successfully employed contractors in smaller-scale contingencies in Somalia, Bosnia, and Haiti. Use of a contractor in Somalia enabled a major logistical unit to return early, bolstering the Army's ability to fight a major war. Contractors may be particularly valuable in environments where it makes sense to work outside the military logistics system. Still, contractors are just that—contractors. They are only required to do what they have contracted for and may not be as responsive or as flexible as military units. Furthermore, while they may be less expensive than adding force structure, they are not cheap. The Army paid a contractor $77 million for the Somalia operation and three times that in Bosnia thus far. If additional funds are not provided, contractor expenses can cut into operating and acquisition accounts.

Using the Reserves

The Reserve Components (RC) are another obvious source of capability. They are the primary repository for some capabilities such as civil affairs or public affairs units. However, Arroyo Center analysis suggests that the best use of most RC units in offsetting the effects of peace operations lies in restoring the Army's warfighting capability rather than direct participation in the smaller contingency. Using the RC works best when the planning horizons are long. For the initial commitment, peace operations and other smaller-scale contingencies often have short planning horizons.[2]

In some cases, the RC can fulfill a theater war role in lieu of an active unit if a slight delay in arrival is acceptable or if the unit can be made ready somewhat sooner. For example, cargo documentation teams are needed in a theater conflict by approximately day 15; those in the RC can arrive by about day 18. If this delay is acceptable, plans can be modified, and the current force structure is adequate. If not, some modest additional resources given to the RC could make the teams available sooner. This approach could apply to other types of units frequently needed for smaller-scale contingencies, water purification for example.

Another possible use of the RC is to backfill active units that have deployed. An RC unit could permanently

[2]If the contingency turns into a long-term commitment, the RC can play an important role, as they have in Bosnia.

associate with an active unit. If a section or platoon deployed from an active unit, one from the RC would be available to bring the unit up to full strength if it had to go to war. Having associated with the active unit in peacetime, the RC unit would be familiar with its operating procedures and would integrate more easily. Or individual reservists could restore active units to their authorized strength if they have been depleted by cross-leveling.

Using volunteers is another way to tap into RC resources. This approach works well in the Air Force, where crews of aircraft are relatively small, rotate members routinely, and do not require long commitments. The Army has had some success using volunteers for civil affairs and public affairs units. However, the Army frequently needs the collective capability of larger units, and it is harder to get this by relying on volunteers. A sufficient number of those with the right skills may not volunteer from one unit, as was the case in a postal unit that deployed to Somalia in 1992. In this case, the Army had to form a provisional unit with members from multiple organizations and suffered a concomitant loss of cohesion.

Redesigning Organizations

Organization redesign that builds greater flexibility into the force structure also provides a way to counter deleterious effects of smaller-scale contingencies while maintaining (and possibly enhancing) the capability to respond to a theater war. Two ways of adding flexibility being explored by the Army are greater modularity and expanded functionality.

Modularity involves reorganizing functional capabilities within a unit. This approach would require changing the current configuration of, say, a combat support battalion of functionally specialized companies into several combined companies. Each would have its own transportation, supply, and maintenance elements, along with a command and control capability. Thus, instead of drawing bits and pieces from units to get the range of capabilities needed for smaller-scale contingencies, the Army can provide them in a single unit. One or two of these units could deploy to a smaller-scale contingency without affecting the capabilities of the others and could operate cohesively. Having integrated support at the company level enables the Army to tailor its forces to the scale of the mission, both in smaller-scale contingencies and theater wars.

Expanded functionality means adding functions to a unit that are not currently present, i.e., creating multirole units that can accomplish a broader range of tasks. Creating an engineer unit with generalized capabilities would be an example. This approach may make more sense as the force structure declines, enabling the Army to get the most out of limited resources.

TRAINING APPROACHES TO READINESS TRADEOFFS

A great many of the skills required by major conflicts overlap those needed in smaller-scale contingencies. Indeed, discipline and combat effectiveness are essential, so the normal warfighting preparation also substantially readies a unit to participate in smaller-scale contingencies. Some tasks, such as negotiation among contending factions and use of nonlethal weapons, are unique to certain types of smaller-scale contingencies, e.g., peace operations. The Army has been training units on these additional skills once they have been tapped to deploy, and this approach has worked relatively well. However, integrating more training about these types of operations into institutional instruction for officers and senior noncommissioned officers would be beneficial.

For some units, smaller-scale contingencies actually provide training opportunities frequently not available in normal peacetime training. Combat support and combat service support units perform many of the same tasks in large conflicts and smaller-scale contingencies. Engineer units may find opportunities that constrained installation construction budgets have denied to them.

For combat arms units, the situation is more complex, but lower-level units—sections, squads—also report expanded training. Keeping equipment operating for long periods makes crews more proficient, and junior officers and noncommissioned officers have more leadership opportunities because they frequently operate independent of higher headquarters. Also, the demands of a given operation can hone combat skills. Street fighting in Kismayu during the Somalia operation required combat skills: small unit tactics, operations in an urban setting, field medical techniques, to name a few.

However, depending on the nature of the contingency, collective combat skills can atrophy during smaller-scale contingency operations. Panama, Grenada, and, to some extent, Haiti stressed collective fighting skills. But peace operations in Bosnia and humanitarian operations in Rwanda did not. Company- and battalion-level operations in these kinds of deployments can differ significantly from those in theater wars. Indeed, units may not operate as cohesive elements at those levels. Companies may be manning widely dispersed checkpoints. Rules of engagement tend to be far more restrictive and preclude typical company and battalion combat operations because of the danger of injuring noncombatants. The lack of practice at the higher levels also affects the combat skills of the staffs.

Regardless of the training benefits of some smaller-scale contingencies, such participation inevitably interrupts normal unit training for wartime operations. Units report canceling important training events such as annual gunnery evaluations, and when they return from the contingencies they have often spent the operating funds originally intended for training. Although the money is normally restored, it frequently comes so late in the training cycle that units cannot use it effectively. If a unit has to participate in one contingency after another, as some units from the 10th Mountain Division have had to do, it may take quite some time to recover combat skills.

Units can help maintain combat skills by taking advantage of the training opportunities available during the contingency. In some cases, it may be possible to use firing ranges in the location of the contingency, as troops in Haiti and Bosnia have. Other programs such as Expert Infantry or Field Medical badge qualification can help sustain skills. Training devices such as Conduct of Fire Trainers can keep individual skills sharp, and simulations can help sustain collective staff skills.

EQUIPMENT APPROACHES TO READINESS TRADEOFFS

Smaller-scale contingencies can devastate equipment. Units tend to operate equipment more frequently than they do during normal peacetime training, sometimes with reduced maintenance support. Furthermore, mission requirements may cause units to use equipment in conditions it was never designed for. M915 truck tractors in Somalia are a case in point. They were used to haul relief supplies over unimproved dirt roads, but they were built to operate on paved roads. The wear and tear on them was so great that at times only one in five could be used. Furthermore, sometimes units have to modify equipment, e.g., install different types of radios so they can communicate with forces of other nations. Finally, just as cross-leveling affects personnel, it can also affect equipment. If a stay-behind unit has to give up equipment to a deploying one, it will not be able to train properly until the equipment is replaced. In an era of tight budgets, that may not be until the deployed unit returns from the contingency.

Distance and tailoring units can exacerbate the effects on equipment. For a remote contingency such as Somalia, it takes time to set up a system to bring in spare parts and equipment and evacuate damaged items for repair. If a unit has been augmented to meet contingency needs, the organic logistical system is not designed to support the additional unique equipment. The augmented unit may not have the spare parts or trained mechanics, and it may lack specialized tools needed to repair unique items.

Units also suffer because in some cases they do not bring their equipment home. Deploying units have been directed to leave equipment for follow-on forces, contractors, or United Nations forces. This occurred in Somalia, where engineer, medical, and water-purification equipment was left behind. Some of these items take a long time to replace, limiting a unit's ability to regain its wartime readiness when it returns home.

Deployments will always take a toll on equipment, but some actions can mitigate the effects. Some relatively straightforward changes, such as implementing Velocity Management, would provide responsive and efficient logistics support to all contingencies, large or small. The Army could also create sets of equipment for the specific demands of peace operations and give them to deploying units. Such equipment would include unique communications equipment and nonlethal weapons. This approach would limit some of the wear and tear on standard unit equipment that occurs from high rate of use or modification. It would also make these items available sooner. The Army could form mobile training teams to train the deploying support units on how to maintain unfamiliar equipment.

For contingencies that have units rotating through them, it may make sense to deploy an initial equipment set with the first unit and then leave it in place for subsequent units to use as they rotate into the theater. The Army uses a similar concept in prepositioning equipment in likely areas of conflict and at the National Training Center. It saves shipping and recovery costs, and it could speed the redeployment of units, making them available sooner if a large conflict breaks out.

IMPROVING READINESS FOR INFORMATION-RELATED OPERATIONS

Information-related operations refer collectively to intelligence, operations security (OPSEC), deception, C2-neutralization, psychological operations, and public affairs operations. These types of operations are important because they can save lives, build and sustain support for operations, reduce enemy resistance, and help ensure the success of the operation. Indeed, given the U.S. public's low tolerance for casualties and protracted involvement in situations where it perceives no vital interest or principle involved, the success or failure of a future U.S. intervention may depend importantly on the effectiveness of these operations. However, an analysis of information-related operations across a spectrum of past interventions shows that readiness for and effectiveness of some aspects of these operations can be improved significantly.

Intelligence operations must support the particular tasks being performed during the different phases of an

intervention. The interventions in Panama, Somalia, and Haiti, among others, were conducted in a sequence akin to the following four phases: entry, consolidation, reconstitution, and transition. For the entry phase, commanders need detailed intelligence about enemy forces, defenses, command and control, military facilities, and likely response options.

The quality of intelligence support provided to U.S. entry forces has varied. In past short-warning interventions, it has been poor. For example, the forces that entered Somalia were generally uninformed or ill-informed about the capabilities and intentions of their potential opponents. In deliberately planned interventions, intelligence support has been considerably better but still uneven. The quality of intelligence support for the 1994 planned forced entry into Haiti, for example, differed according to location: In the Port-au-Prince area, it was generally very good; in the Haitian countryside, it was often less than adequate.

The factors that contributed to these past intelligence shortcomings included the low collection priorities that had been accorded to the targeted countries; absence of adequate surveillance and reconnaissance; failure or inability to pass available intelligence to operational units; self-imposed constraints on U.S. intelligence collection; failure to exploit human intelligence (HUMINT) sources; and the insufficient use of the lead times provided by available warning.

To improve intelligence support to future entry forces, military and civilian leaders should be prepared to order a surge in intelligence collection at the first signs that a U.S. military intervention might be required. Human intelligence assets should deploy promptly to fill critical information gaps and knowledgeable persons—previously identified both within and outside the government—should be exploited for information relevant to the entry operations. As longer-term measures, U.S. intelligence agencies should give higher priority to developing human sources and intelligence data bases for countries that plausibly might become targets of future interventions.

During the consolidation, reconstitution, and transition phases of an intervention, the intelligence focus shifts to the various residual threats that might endanger U.S. forces or undermine the success of the intervention mission. In these phases, intelligence collectors and analysts typically are also called upon to support U.S. forces in a variety of security, political, diplomatic, humanitarian, and civil affairs tasks.

Since most of the information needed to support these tasks will come from local sources acquired after U.S. forces are on the ground, planners and commanders should ensure that a sufficient number of trained intelligence personnel deploy at the very outset of the intervention to gather information from them. Intelligence collectors and other personnel need increased training on how to cope with the different and complex intelligence demands often encountered in smaller-scale contingencies. Continued attention also must be given to increasing U.S. capabilities to supply linguists, who are vital to effective intelligence operations. Finally, commanders and civilian leaders should employ net assessments informed by area expertise to guide their decisions about intervention objectives and strategy. In Somalia, flawed assessment contributed importantly to intervention failures.

OPSEC typically has been stringent during intervention planning and preparations. Such safeguards notwithstanding, enemy forces in Grenada, Panama, and Haiti knew that U.S. action was imminent. They were warned, at least in part, by television and other media coverage of U.S. force deployments. Opposition forces also were able to guess many of the targets of the U.S. assaults. Predicting the likely sites of U.S. operations was not difficult because of prevailing terrain characteristics and the limited number of airfields and military facilities in the country.

Because of the crisis atmosphere and media attention that will invariably surround future entry operations, commanders need to be ready to suppress alerted defenses during the entry phase, regardless of the degree of OPSEC employed. To compensate for breakdowns in OPSEC, commanders will have to rely more on deception and the neutralization of enemy command and control capabilities to lessen enemy opposition. In addition, commanders must guard against allowing the emphasis on security to become counterproductive in entry operations, as excessive compartmentalization in some past interventions has adversely affected planning, prevented the transmission of intelligence, and put American lives at risk. In contrast, operations security may require greater emphasis in the consolidation, reconstitution, and transition phases even when U.S. forces confront lightly armed, low-technology opponents.

Psychological operations (PSYOP) have proved a valuable force multiplier. Commanders cite the effects of loudspeaker teams in promoting the surrender of enemy forces and quelling indigenous violence. Still, it is visible combat capabilities and operations that produce the most important psychological effects. In Bosnia, carefully orchestrated shows of force by U.S. helicopter and armor elements helped persuade the former warring parties to implement the military articles of the Dayton Accords.

Because the psychological effect of military actions can prove so decisive in smaller-scale contingencies, U.S. lead-

ers should consult and heed the advice of area experts and psychological operations specialists about the potential psychological effects of proposed military operations. When concepts of operation have violated prevailing cultural, political, and military realities, U.S. attempts to derive beneficial psychological effect from military action have proved counterproductive. Attacks aimed at intimidating Aideed in Somalia solidified his support and hardened opposition to U.S. forces. Linguists are also an important element of psychological operations, and they need to deploy with entry force PSYOP elements. Finally, the peoples of many underdeveloped countries depend on radio as a source of information, and opponents use radio broadcasts to mobilize opposition to U.S. forces and to disseminate harmful misinformation. U.S. forces need an improved capability to locate and silence mobile radio transmitters.

Public affairs operations are important for any military involvement but particularly so for smaller-scale contingencies. Media coverage can affect policy and the targets and timing of military operations. Most important, media coverage and commentary can give information to the U.S. public about the worth and likely success of the intervention. As a consequence, U.S. military and civilian leaders and their spokespersons must be well prepared to explain and justify intervention policy and behavior. Also necessary is a well-organized public affairs operation to facilitate the media's coverage of intervention forces and activities. Success in these latter operations has been mixed. Panama was generally regarded as poorly done, whereas Haiti was largely seen as a success.

The requisite preconditions for effective public affairs are intervention objectives and policies that the Congress and public can support. Any change in objectives or increase in combat involvement needs to be explained, along with the possible costs. Civilian casualties or collateral damage caused by U.S. forces require prompt action. In past operations when the response to such incidents was slow or absent, the resulting adverse fallout was magnified. Commanders and public affairs personnel also must be prepared to counter adversary attempts to manipulate public opinion. Somalia showed that even supposedly "unsophisticated" opponents can be skilled at propaganda and staging events to influence public attitudes. Finally, commanders must prepare for a ubiquitous media presence, even during entry operations.

CONCLUSION

Neither smaller-scale contingencies nor preparation for major theater wars will disappear from the Army's agenda. Both are in the nation's interest, and the Army has no choice but to prepare itself for both. However, preparation for and participation in the former affects the Army's ability to do the latter, even though that effect may not be readily apparent. The Army can help resolve its dilemma of preparing for both by implementing or supporting the changes recommended here. Modest structural, training, and equipment changes will bolster the Army's capability for both types of operations. Less modest but still feasible changes will also help it better execute the information operations that are critical to smaller-scale contingencies.